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A DRAMATIC POEM



A. S. Clarke

*With the Regard of the
Author to A. S. Clarke
as a friend and fellow student*

JANE McCREA,

A Dramatic Poem.

BY JOHN BRYSON.

FORT EDWARD:

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To

REV. PROF. J. E. KING,

FOR THE KIND INTEREST HE HAS EVINCED

In behalf of the Author,

AND AS A SMALL TOKEN OF REGARD,

THE FOLLOWING POEM

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

JANE MCCREA, A Dramatic Poem.

BY JOHN BRYSON.

SCENE I.

A Street in Fort Edward. Enter JONATHAN and DAVID JONES.

DAVID.

Shall we remain inactive 'mid the strife,
And stand as neutral, to preserve this life,
When wild commotions jar our land,
Caused by that mad fanatic band,
Who wish to claim the nation as their own,
And hurl defiance at the British throne,
No, bold Burgoyne, I hear, is marching down,
To fight the battles for our King and Crown ;
Go, let us join him, that the war may cease,
And bring our homes, that boon of heaven—peace.

JONATHAN.

In this I'll join thee, heart and hand,
For now, I long to face that rebel band ;
I ne'er can rest till I behold the day,
When I will meet that traitor, John McCrea,
He call'd me coward, for no other cause,
Than that I favored Britain's rightful laws.

DAVID.

Hold, brother, hold ; retract that vow, I pray,
Talk not of vengeance, on my friend McCrea ;
Though he has wrong'd thee, yet thou'lt harm him not,
But let this enmity be soon forgot ;
For her dear sake, whose love I cherish more
Than all the world, with its golden store.

JONATHAN.

I will withdraw it, for her dear sake alone,
For her good wish, I'd sacrifice my own;
I had forgot by playing such a part,
I'd wound thy lady's gentle, loving heart.

DAVID.

'Tis well, but I must now begone,
To-night I meet her in the grove alone,
There will I tell, what we intend to do,
I well can trust her, for her heart is true;
Then will I join thee, and we'll haste away,
And reach the army by the break of day.

SCENE II.

The banks of the Hudson. Moonlight. Enter DAVID JONES and JANE MCCREA.

JONES.

'Tis hard to part, but I must go,
And help to quell the rebel foe,
Who would against our King arise,
And all his noble laws despise.
With all their wild, fanatic zeal,
Can they withstand old Britain's steel?
No, they must fall, for woe the cause,
That dare to spurn our sovereign laws.
To save my country from that shame,
I will Great Britain's right maintain,
And crush the project in the bud,
Ere all the land be stained in blood.

JANE.

Alas! I fear it long will be,
Ere thou wilt come again to me,
And thou may'st be in battle slain,
And never more return again.
Oh! that this cruel war would cease,
And bring again, sweet, smiling peace;

When from the din of war's alarms,
Restored within each others' arms.
When slaughtering guns are heard no more,
Along the Hudson's tranquil shore,
Here would we live, and here enjoy
Those sweet pursuits, that wars destroy.
My brother, dear as life to me,
Has struck the blow for Liberty;
Ah! should'st thou then to battle go,
And show thyself his mortal foe,
Discord between you will arise,
And break true friendship's dearest ties;
These vows will end which we have plighted,
And all our hopes will then be blighted.

JONES.

Come, talk not thus, dry up those tears,
Dispel those sad foreboding fears;
'Tis true thy brother, sad to say,
Hath joined the rebels in the fray;
But for thy sake where'er I go,
I ne'er shall show myself his foe;
Yet to do justice to our King,
(As yet inactive I have been,)
I must away, and with them there
Be willing in the strife to share.
And surely, thou wilt not disdain
The honors I may chance to gain;
For whatsoe'er my lot may be
Thro' life, I'll share it, love, with thee.
I will devise some secret scheme,
Whereby some friend may come unseen,
And bring you tidings from afar,
Where'er may be the seat of war.

JANE.

Thy counsel, noble, kind, and wise,
I will approve, and not despise,

And freely would I sacrifice
All that is dear in life to me,
If I can only share with thee
Life's fortune's, whatsoe'er they be.

JONES.

Oh! what a noble heart is thine,
Thy zeal adds life to thoughts like mine;
And 'mid the battle's stormy swell,
My thoughts will ever on thee dwell,
And should it be this feeble hand,
Shall win me honor and command,
My greatest, highest thought will be,
That they are won for such as thee.
But we must part, yon pale moon's light
Will guide me on my way to-night.

JANE.

So fare thee well, since thou must go,
If cruel fate decrees it so,
May Heaven guard thee mid the strife,
And there preserve thy valued life;
And when the bloody conflict's o'er,
We'll wander happy by this shore,
And let oblivion ever cast
Its gloomy mantle o'er the past.

JONES.

Thus may it be, may Heaven smile,
And cheer our drooping hearts the while.
The storm which seems so dark to-day,
I trust ere long will pass away;
The rebels soon will see, I fear,
The folly of their mad career;
Then full of joy our hearts will swell,
So, for the present, fare thee well.

SCENE III.

A Cottage near the Fort. Enter PETER FREEL and JOHN MCCREA.

FREEL.

Sad news, indeed ; I cannot see,
As yet, the dawn of liberty ;
But darker still the prospects grow,
And sadder, deeper grows our woe.
Old Britain's Lion floats amain,
Victorious o'er each conquered plain ;
We cannot stand so great a foe,
And woe to them who strike the blow.
How many homes are now bereft ?
How many wives and orphans left,
To mourn for those in battle slain ?
Who never will return again.
Look to that wild Canadian shore,
That now lies redden'd with their gore ;
For all that sacrifice of life,
What gain'd the patriots in the strife ?
But driven back, a conquered band,
To bring disgrace upon our land.

MCCREA.

Dost thou turn traitor to the cause
And crouch beneath proud England's laws ?
What though our little, feeble band,
Has been defeated by her hand ;
I'd rather win a freeman's grave,
Than live, and be an abject slave !
If every man, in this, our land,
Would take a firm, united stand,
And not shrink back, a trembling knave,
To shun the vortex of the grave,
Ah ! freedom soon would bless our shore,
And tyrants rule our land no more ;

The mother then would smile for joy,
To think her husband, or her boy,
Had died to gain that noble cause,
That gives the poor mechanic laws.

FREEL.

The cause is good, but can you show
How we can conquer such a foe ;
If every man, in this our land,
Would take a firm, united stand,
Yet all would fail I fear to bring,
Into subjection, such a king.

MCCREA.

What is a king, 'tis but a name,
The basest wretch on earth may claim ;
What right has he to bind us down,
In vile submission to his crown,
And tax our nation to support
His royal dignity, and court.
If this be right, then let us yield,
If not, then let us take the field :
Though odds may be against us cast,
We will be conquerers at last,
Our God will aid us in the fight,
For sure our cause is just and right,
Tyrannic despots, then shall feel,
The vengeance of the patriot's steel.

FREEL.

Fain would I hope that such may be,
And now I long that day to see,
Though darkness gather round us now,
And sorrow sit on every brow,
Yet with fresh energy, and might,
Will I defend my country's rights ;
Thy cheering words seem to impart
Fresh courage to my drooping heart.

MCCREA.

What need we fear, our cause is just,
In God alone, we put our trust,
He will not see our chosen land,
Oppressed beneath a tyrant's hand;
How happy then our land will be,
When all are equal, all are free!
Then shall the weary and oppressed
Upon our shore find peace and rest.
Then let us on, our watch-word be,
Death, or glorious Liberty!

SCENE IV.

*British Encampment. Interior of Burgoyne's Head Quarters.**Enter an Officer, in haste.*

OFFICER.

My Lord, a youth of noble mien,
Who longs to serve our gracious King,
Now waits without, he seems to know
The track of our rebellious foe.

BURGOYNE.

Then much we need some trusty hand,
To guide us thro' this forest land;
Admit him in, as I may know
Whether he be a friend or foe.

Exit Officer, and enter again bringing in DAVID JONES.

Young stranger, may I ask your name,
And learn the place from whence you came?

JONES.

Sir, I have left my friends and home,
And hither here a friend I've come,
Some humble office to obtain,
If I be worthy of the same,
That I might add another hand,
To crush that mad, rebellious band,
Who have presumption to arise,
Against our king, so good, and wise.

Each pass, along this way, I know,
Which leads thee forward to the foe :
If thou would'st put thy trust in me,
I here would pledge thy guide to be.
My name is Jones, my home has been
Fort Edward, by the Hudson's stream.

BURGOYNE.

Thy modest speech doth please me well,
And I, with safety, may foretell,
That thou wilt win thyself a name,
If thou those principles maintain ;
A friend to justice, and our king,
Whose object ever yet has been
To raise his subjects up to share,
That freedom, found no other where ;
He ill demands this vile outrage,
In which so many hearts engage,
But soon they'll find the stern rod
Of justice, and the wrath of God
Will crush their base projected plan.

JONES.

'Tis true, man's inhumanity to man,
Brings many a scene of cruel strife
Upon the stage of human life,
As for myself, I see no cause
Why they should spurn our present laws.

BURGOYNE.

Thou'rt right, 'tis base ingratitude,
That they should rise, in war, so rude.
Our king first raised, by his command,
His standard, on New England's strand,
And cheered the lowly pilgrims there,
Amid those hours of dark despair.

JONES.

'Tis sad, to think, this infant soil,
Should be the seat of such turmoil :

This storm I hope, will pass away,
And bring to me a brighter day.

BURGOYNE.

To-morrow, then, by break of day,
The army shall be on its way.
Go, join the ranks, and bravely show
Thyself, when first we meet the foe.
To-morrow, I may want thy aid
To guide us through this forest glade.

SCENE V.

An apartmant in a cottage near the Hudson. Interview between

LADY MCNEIL and JANE MCCREA.

LADY MCNEIL.

What makes thee look so sad to-night,
Those eyes so dim, once ever bright ;
Me thought that grief could never wear
Or stain thy beauty with a tear.

JANE.

Alas ! vain mirth has ever fled,
No joyful ray again to shed,
Such times as these, I fear, portend
To finish with some fearful end.
Those dearest to my heart in life,
Grapple with each other in the strife,
And should they fall, my life would be
Fraught with endless misery.

LADY MCNEIL.

'Tis sad, indeed, to contemplate,
If such must be thy future fate :
But give not way to gloomy fears,
Nor shed so many sorrowing tears.
He, whom thou love'st, will soon be here,
Then what hast thou to doubt or fear.

JANE.

I had a fearful dream last night,
The vision still doth haunt my sight,

It makes me sad, for it would seem,
More then an empty, idle dream.

LADY MCNEIL.

Dost thou not on thy pillow weep,
And lull thyself with tears to sleep?
When all those fears, thy mind pursue
Arise, to thy affrighted view—
But let me hear what thou has seen
Last night, in this mysterious dream.

JANE.

Methought, a band of warriors came,
Their leader was a chief of fame;
They came, methought in all their pride,
To bear me to young Jones' side,
(Where, as they said, he waited me,
And soon I was his bride to be.)
Flush'd with delight, I rode away
With them, in all their grand array,
But, soon alas! to my dismay,
I found that I had been betrayed,
And left alone, a helpless maid,
'Mong savage men, far from my home,
Where aid, methought, would never come,

[*Jane pauses.*]

LADY MCNEIL.

And was this all thy wondrous dream?

JANE.

Ah! no, I saw a sadder scene:
I saw young Jones in that rude den,
The leader of those savage men:
He came, my trembling hands he took,
And cast on me a tender look,
Then pressed me to his manly side,
And said, "now wilt thou be my bride?"
But ere I could to this reply,
Some monster, who was standing by,

Waved his bright tomahawk on high,
And laid him lifeless at my feet,
To make my misery more complete.

LADY MCNEIL.

'Tis strange, indeed, but think not Jane
Thou wilt behold this scene again ;
'Twas but a dream, and dreams you know,
Does oft times cast a veil of woe
Around such hearts, that would believe,
The scenes their fancy chance to weave.

JANE.

Ah ! many a dream I've dreamt before
That's passed, and never thought of more ;
This vision still, to memory clings,
And every thought, a pang of horror brings.

LADY MCNEIL.

Peace will yet bless thy rural cot,
When all those dreams will be forgot :
But now good night, may sweet repose
Bring brighter dreams to soothe thy woes.

SCENE VI.

*British Encampment. Enter DAVID JONES, in the costume of a
British officer, and ALEXANDER FREEL.*

JONES.

Wouldst thou then perform a sweet task,
And grant a favor I would ask ?

ALEX. FREEL.

Think not, I'd turn away in scorn,
And shrink a duty to perform :
What aid this feeble hand can lend,
Is freely given, my noble friend.

JONES.

Take this letter, 'tis to Jane McCrea,
And dangers may beset thy way,
Guard well against thy watchful foe,

And take the safest path you know :
Descend the Hudson's gentle stream,
There thou may'st glide along unseen,
Beneath the hanging branches green.
In safety, then thou'lt reach her cot,
The place thou canst mistake it not ;
For there together we have played,
In child-like frolic through the glade.

ALEX. FREEL.

Fear not, my friend, for well I know
How to elude the wily foe.
The love I bear for her, and thee,
Will be enough to temper me
Against all dangers, I may meet
Upon the way which leads me on,
Near to my once loved, happy home.

JONES.

'Tis well, my all I trust in thee,
I know that faithful thou wilt be,
Then go—may gentle Heaven guide
Thy skiff, in safety o'er the tide.

SCENE VII.

The banks of the Hudson. JANE MCCREA walking alone.

JANE.

Ye smile in vain, sweet modest flowers,
A charm has left thy lovely bowers ;
Thou little stream, thy murmurings clear,
No more with joy will greet mine ear ;
Ye warbling songsters of the grove,
No more delighted will I rove
To listen to your pleasing lays,
As I have done in former days,
For he, alas ! for whom I mourn,
I fear will never more return.

A Boat is seen at a distance.

But see, some one with hasty oar,

Now makes his way along the shore—
What can this this mean? I'll watch and see
Who this strange visitor may be.

The boat approaches near the shore. Jane recognizes Alex. Freel.

Ah! 'tis my friend, why comes he here?
There must be something wrong I fear,
Yet, be thou still my trembling heart,
And bid not gloomy phantoms start;
For he may come with tidings dear,
My sad, desponding heart to cheer.

Freel lands his boat upon the shore and beholds Jane who comes forth to meet him.

ALEX. FREEL.

How glad, am I, to meet you here,
'Twould seem, the star of fortune's near,
That I should meet you here alone,
While wandering from thy cottage home;
Where here we may alone convene,
As I may judge, we are unseen.
Thy lover, who is matchless brave,
(For thrice he did in battle save
My worthless life,) hath sent me here,
With tidings, which I hope will cheer
Thy drooping heart, for thou dost seem,
In sorrow, now—for him I ween.

JANE.

Indeed, all, all is sorrow now,
And grief hangs pale on every brow,
Then think not strange, my worthy friend,
If I my tears with others blend.

ALEX. FREEL.

Then take this letter, I have kept with care,
And may the thoughts that are inserted there
Bring to thy bosom sweet relief,
And may you know no more of grief;
Bright as the rays of summer's morn,
May joy to thy breast return.

JANE.

Thanks, noble friend, I can't repay
The debt I owe thee, nor can I portray
In words, the gratitude I feel;
But, oh! may Heaven guard thy weal,
And may you high in honor rise,
And win thyself a glorious prize;
This my humble prayer shall be,
When thou art far away from me.

ALEX. FREEL.

Then with thy blessing I'll begone,
Or we may be espied alone—
Hast thou no token I may bear
Away to thy fond lover, where
He waits me now, with anxious care?

JANE.

Handing him a paper on which she has been writing.

Take this, and speed thee on thy way,
For darkness soon will close the day;
Tell him 'tis all I can bestow,
And should we never meet again below,
I have a hope, that hope to mortals given,
That we shall meet, to part no more, in Heaven.

ALEX. FREEL.

I will obey, with friendship true
I'll bid thee now, a fond adieu. *Exit.*

JANE.

Gazing on the letter which she holds in her hand.

Forget thee, ah! can I forget
That solemn hour when last we met?
No, never, 'till I cease to be,
Can I forget to think of thee.

SCENE VIII.

Enter DAVID JONES with a letter in his hand which he has received from JANE MCCREA.

JONES.

My bosom lord sits lightly now,
The cloud of sorrow leaves my brow,
For she is faithful still to me,
And if I live, I soon will be
Blest with her smiles, 'mid palace halls,
When every trembling rebel falls. *Enter DULUTH.*
Ah! welcome, Chief, I sent for thee,
To see if thou would'st grant to me
A favor—thee alone I ask—
For none but thee, could well perform the task.
I know a maiden, fair, and young,
Whose raven locks, are loosely hung
Upon a bosom pure as snow;
Then wilt thou Chief, consent to go,
And bring here before mine eyes?
For she will prove a worthy prize.

DULUTH.

O! ever grateful will I be,
Since thou hast here conferred on me
That honor, and should I betray
My trust, Oh! brother take my power away.
May the Great Spirit, o'er us now,
Hear me, I pledge a solemn vow,
That I will bring her free from harm,
While I can raise this feeble arm.
Where does she dwell, in what sweet grove,
Does this fair maiden love to rove?

JONES.

At Fort Edward, fair to view,
By the Hudson's waters blue,

Dwells this maiden, and with you
I charge this letter, which she'll know,
And follow thee where'er you go.
But Oh! Chief remember this,
In thee I trust my future bliss;
For should she fall 'mid contending strife,
Sad, sad would be my future life.

DULUTH.

I will remember, and obey the call,
And sooner would the red man fall
Disgraced in arms, than turn away,
From honor's path, and then betray
The friend he's sworn to obey.

JONES.

Forgive me Chief, I'll doubt no more,
I've trusted thy good faith before,
So on, good Chief, thy way pursue;
Above the fort, upon the hill,
Beside the pine tree and the rill,
Stand there, and from a cot below
This maid will watch thee, and shall know
When thou wilt give the signal there
That all is well, and will repair,
To steal away to thee unseen,
Beneath the frowning pines so green.
So, now begone, I'll watch and pray,
That God may speed thee on thy way.

SCENE IX.

DULUTH *and his band of Indians on the summit of the hill above
Fort Edward.*

DULUTH.

So, we have reach'd the place at last,
Unseen the forest we have passed.
Now raise the signal up on high,
There seems to be no pale face nigh.

JANE MCCREA is seen coming from the cottage.

Ah! see, she comes, then all is well,
No evil hath our plans befell;

The report of fire arms is heard.

But hark! all is not right—I fear
That we have been discovered here.

JANE becomes alarmed at the report and runs back towards the cottage.

The maid has fled, then all is lost!
Withdraw my kinsmen from your post—
But stay—no danger is at hand,
'Tis but Le Loup, and his wild band—
They rush toward the cottage there.
What means this!—have they come to share
The honors, we ourselves should wear?

LE LOUP is seen dragging JANE from the cottage.

See how they drag her from the cot!
Come, let us save her, or return not.

They advance towards LE LOUP.

Stand, warrior stand! what does this mean?
Why hast thou stole away unseen
To seize upon this maiden, fair,
When I have sworn an oath to bear
Her safely to her lover's side,
Who waits to make her soon his bride.

LE LOUP.

It matters not if thou hast sworn

More than your able to perform.
Is it for me, to yield the prize
Which I have won before thine eyes ;
No, think not, favored tho' you be,
That I will yield her unto thee.

DULUTH.

What right hast thou to interpose,
To treat thy friends as mortal foes ;
That honor was conferred on me,
A favor, never granted thee ;
Why hast thou come with treach'rous aim,
To bring disgrace upon thy name ?

LE LOUP.

Thou reason'st well, thy speech is fair,
But by yon blue arched Heaven, I swear
That I shall never yield to thee,
What does by right befall to me.

JANE.

Hear me good chieftains, end this strife,
I place small value on my life.

*The report of fire-arms is heard, and the
Americans are seen coming from the Fort.*

But fly, your enemies are near,
Or we will be discovered here.

DULUTH.

Then on, fair maid, and follow me,
For I have sworn thy guide to be !

*JANE undertakes to follow DULUTH, LE LOUP springs forward
and plunges his tomahawk into her bosom.*

LE LOUP.

Now go, good Chief, and take thy prize,
See, at thy feet she bleeding lies !

DULUTH.

Oh! cruel Chief, thy life shall pay
For this dark deed thou'st done to-day.

*They retire before the Americans, who are in pursuit,
bearing off in triumph the scalp of JANE MCCREA.*

SCENE X.

British Camp. DAVID JONES and DULUTH.

JONES.

Where is my bride, speak quickly now,
For terror sits upon thy brow!

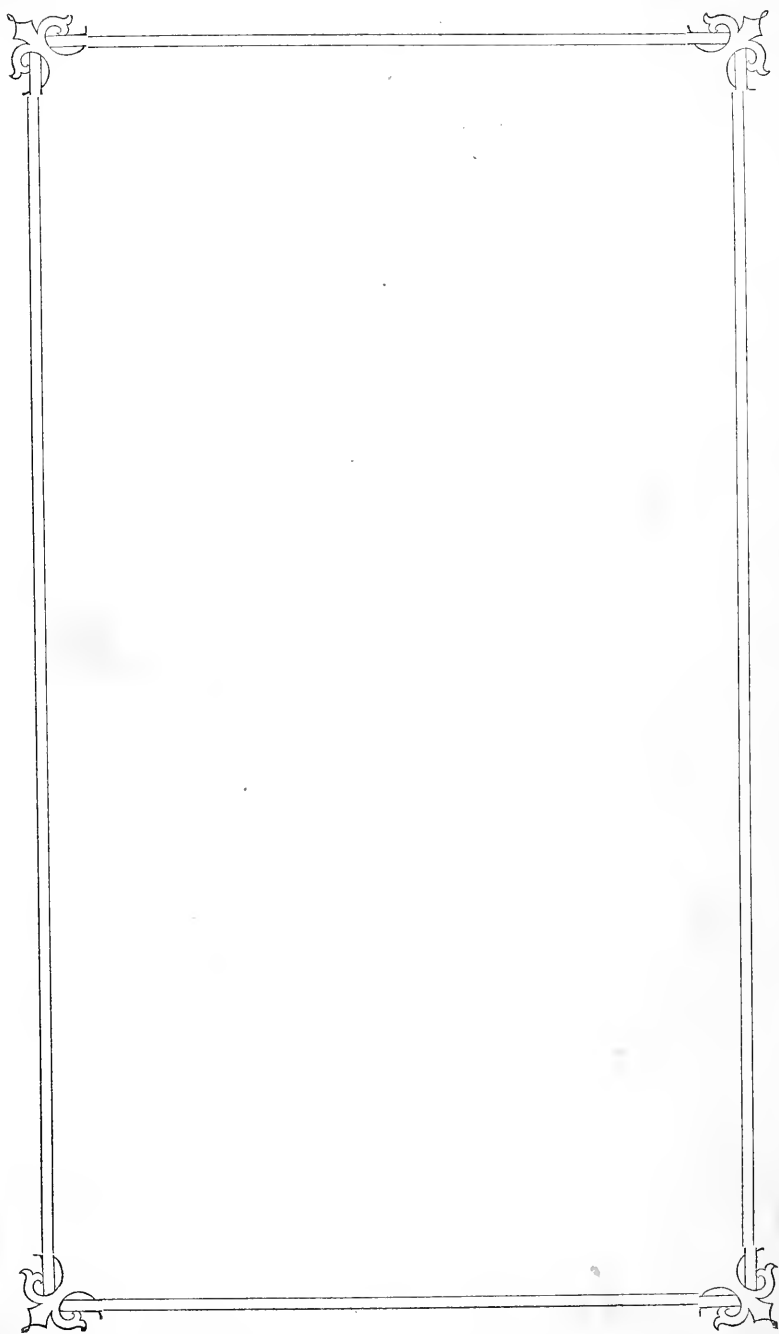
DULUTH.

I blush to speak, yet I am free
From all the vows I pledged to thee:
I reached the place, in safety, where
We soon espied thy lady fair,
And all would have been well, had not
The fierce Le Loup passed by her cot;
He seized her, and without delay
He thought to hurry her away:
I bade him stand, and yield the maid,
And told him all the vows I'd made.
I took her, and with purpose true,
I thought to bear her safe to you.
Frantic with rage Le Loup stood there,
And whirl'd his tomahawk in air,
And ere I could arrest the blow,
Thy lady fell—the rest you know!

JONES.

Enough, oh! Chief, I pray begone,
I wish to think of this alone. [*Exit DULUTH.*
Oh! cursed ambition, thy reward is just,
Fool that I was in thee to trust.

All those bright dreams of fame and power,
Have vanished in a single hour;
Would I had fallen in the fray,
Ere I beheld this fatal day.
O, curse be on my coward heart,
That I have played the traitor's part:
If I had served my country true,
As other noble patriots do,
This shameful deed would ne'er have shed
Its horrors on my guilty head. *Exit.*





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